

✓ **Latest release**

Trade union membership

Trade union membership by employment and socio-demographic characteristics such as full-time/part-time, age, industry, occupation, education, earnings

Reference period August 2022

Released 14/12/2022

On this page

[Key statistics](#)

[Trade union members](#)

[Trade union membership over time](#)

[Duration of membership](#)

[Industry](#)

[Occupation](#)

[Educational attainment](#)

[State and territory](#)

[Earnings](#)

[Job characteristics](#)

[Data downloads](#)

[Historical downloads](#)

[Methodology](#)

Key statistics

- 12.5% of employees (1.4 million) were trade union members.
- Since 1992, the proportion of employees who were trade union members has fallen from 41% to 12.5%.
- The Education and training industry (30%) and the Professionals occupation group (19%) had the highest rates of trade union membership.

Other topics

Statistics from the [Characteristics of Employment \(/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/characteristics-employment-australia/latest-release\)](/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/characteristics-employment-australia/latest-release) survey are also published in three other topic-based releases.

- [Employee earnings \(/statistics/labour/earnings-and-work-hours/employee-earnings/latest-release\)](/statistics/labour/earnings-and-work-hours/employee-earnings/latest-release)
- [Working arrangements \(/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/working-arrangements/latest-release\)](/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/working-arrangements/latest-release)
- [Labour hire workers \(/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/labour-hire-workers/latest-release\)](/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/labour-hire-workers/latest-release)

Microdata and TableBuilder

Characteristics of Employment microdata for 2014 to 2022 will be available in [TableBuilder \(/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/tablebuilder\)](/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/tablebuilder) and [DataLab \(/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/datalab\)](/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/datalab) from 16 December 2022. For more information, refer to [Microdata and TableBuilder: Characteristics of Employment \(/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/available-microdata-tablebuilder/characteristics-employment-australia\)](/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/available-microdata-tablebuilder/characteristics-employment-australia).

Trade union members

There were 1.4 million trade union members in August 2022. 10.8% of part-time employees were trade union members compared to 13.3% who worked in full-time jobs.

Trade union membership

	Full-time (%)	Part-time (%)	Total (%)
1988	47.4	24.7	43.1
1994	40.7	23.1	36.6
1998	33.0	20.6	29.9
2004	27.0	17.3	24.1
2010	21.5	15.1	19.5
2016	17.2	12.3	15.6
2018	16.0	11.8	14.6
2020	15.3	12.3	14.3

	Full-time (%)	Part-time (%)	Total (%)
2022	13.3	10.8	12.5

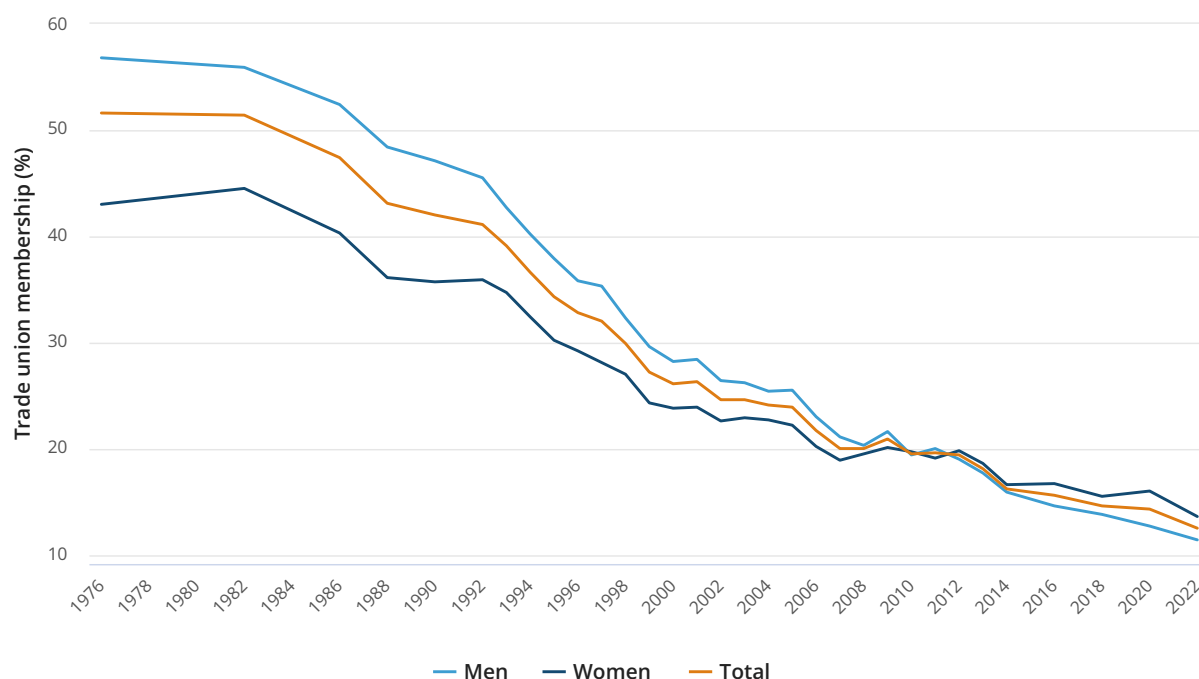
Trade union membership tends to increase with age. In August 2022 only 2% of employees aged 15-19 years and 5% aged 20-24 were trade union members. This increased to 19% for employees aged 55-59 and 21% for employees aged 60-64.

Trade union membership over time

Of the 11.4 million employees in August 2022, 12.5% were a member of a trade union in their main job. This is a decrease from the 14.3% recorded in August 2020.

Trade union membership has generally declined since 1992. From 1992 to 2022, the proportion of employees who were trade union members has fallen from 41.1% to 12.5% (from 45.5% to 11.4% for men and 35.9% to 13.6% for women).

Trade union membership by sex - 1976 to 2022



Data for 1976-1988 sourced from [Trade Union Members \(https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf)

[/second+level+view?ReadForm&prodno=6325.0&viewtitle=Trade%20Union%20Members,%20Australia~August%201996~Latest~09/02/1997&&tabname=Past%20Future%20Issues&prodno=6325.0&issue=August%201996&num=&view=&\).](#)

Duration of membership

The majority of trade union members held membership for 5 years or more.

Women made up a greater proportion of trade union membership (54%) than men (46%).

Duration of trade union membership

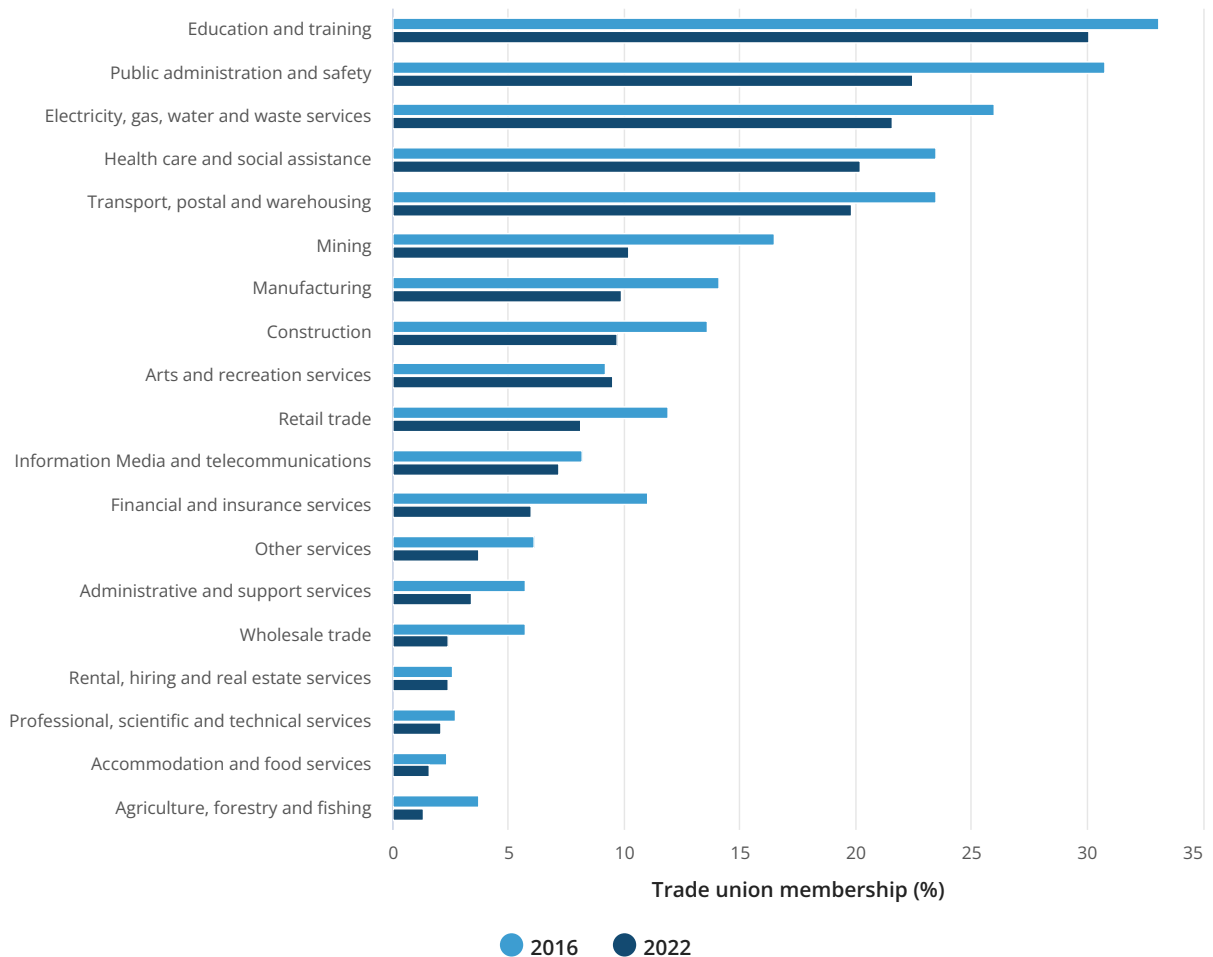
	Fewer than 5 years ('000)	5 years or more ('000)	Total ('000)
Men	202.6	447.5	650
Women	231.8	541.3	773.1
Total	434.3	988.8	1,423.1

Industry

The industries with the highest proportion of employees who were trade union members were:

- Education and training (30%)
- Public administration and safety (23%)
- Electricity, gas, water and waste services (22%).

Trade union membership, by industry



For more information on Industries, refer to [Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification \(ANZSIC\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/1292.0) (<https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/1292.0>).

Occupation

The occupations which recorded the highest proportion of employees who were Trade Union members were:

- Professionals (19%)
- Machinery operators and drivers (17%)
- Community and Personal Service Workers (15%).

Trade union membership, by occupation and skill level



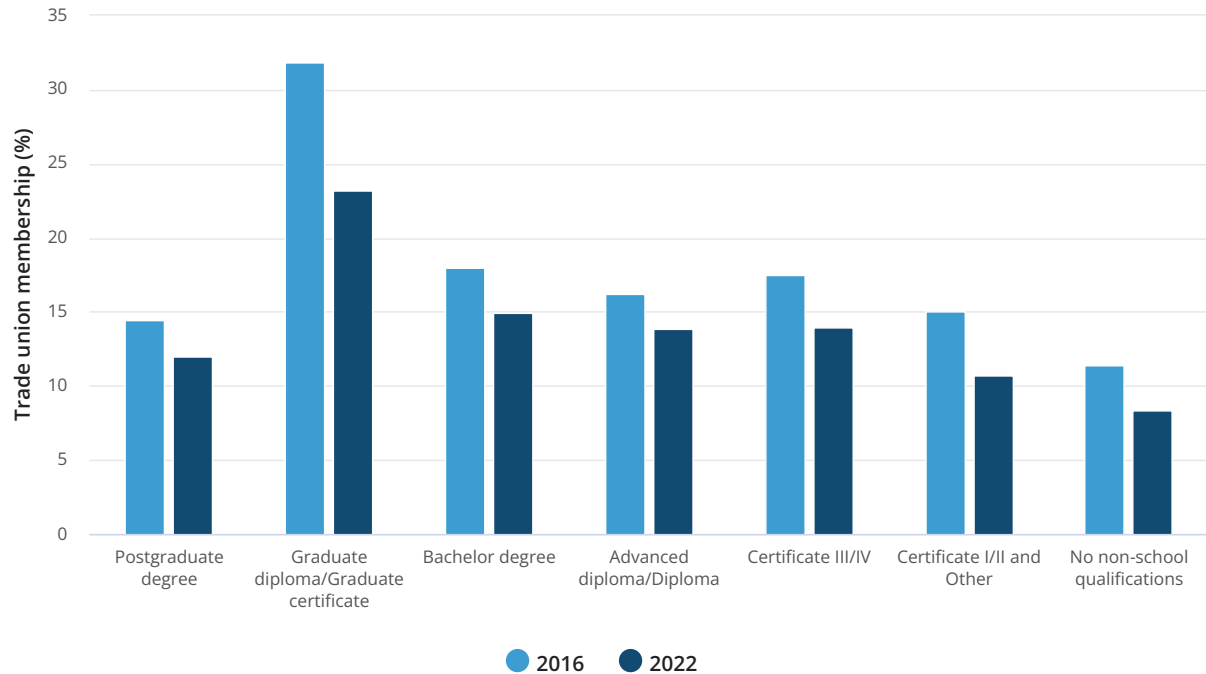
Data is coded to ANZSCO ver 1.2. For more information on Occupations and Skill level, refer to [ANZSCO - Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations \(https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/allprimarymainfeatures/4AF138F6DB4FFD4BCA2571E200096BAD?opendocument\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/allprimarymainfeatures/4AF138F6DB4FFD4BCA2571E200096BAD?opendocument).

Educational attainment

Trade union membership was considerably more prevalent for employed people with a Graduate diploma or Graduate certificate (23%), than for other qualifications. The most common fields of study were Health (41%) and Education (35%).

Trade union membership was lowest amongst those without non-school qualifications (9%).

Trade union membership, by educational attainment

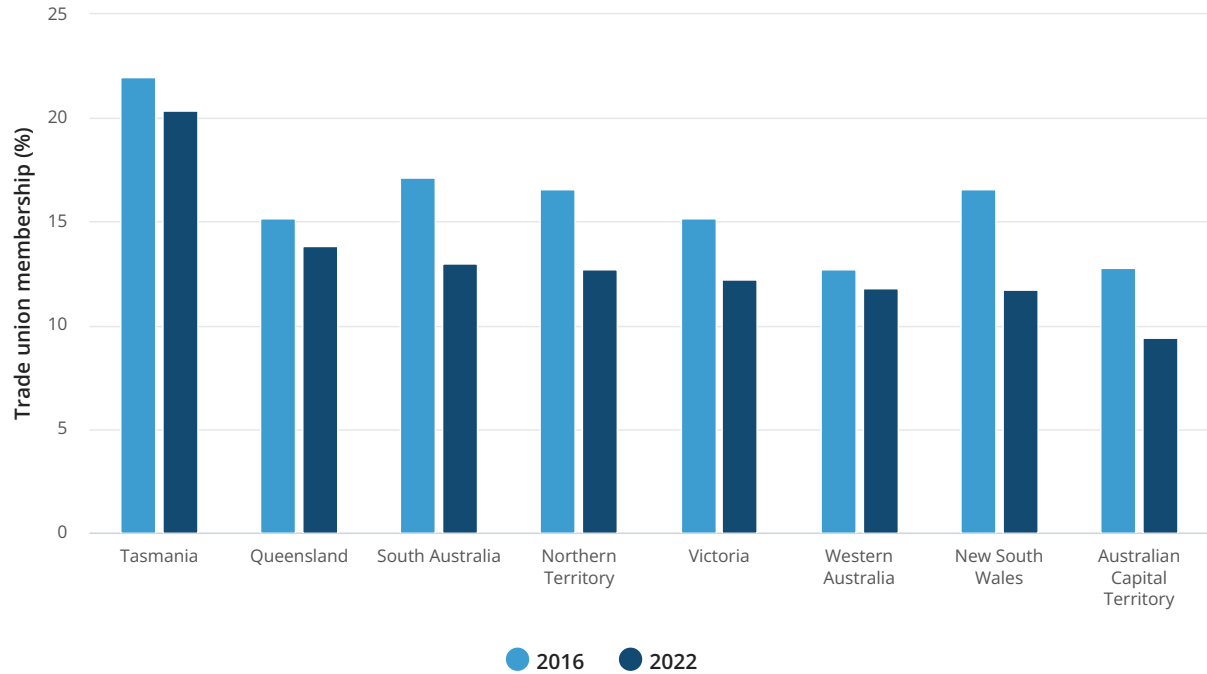


For more information on educational attainment, refer to [Australian Standard Classification of Education \(ASCED\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/1272.0) (<https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/1272.0>).

State and territory

Tasmania had the highest proportion (20%) of employees who were trade union members, while New South Wales and the ACT had the lowest (12% and 9% respectively).

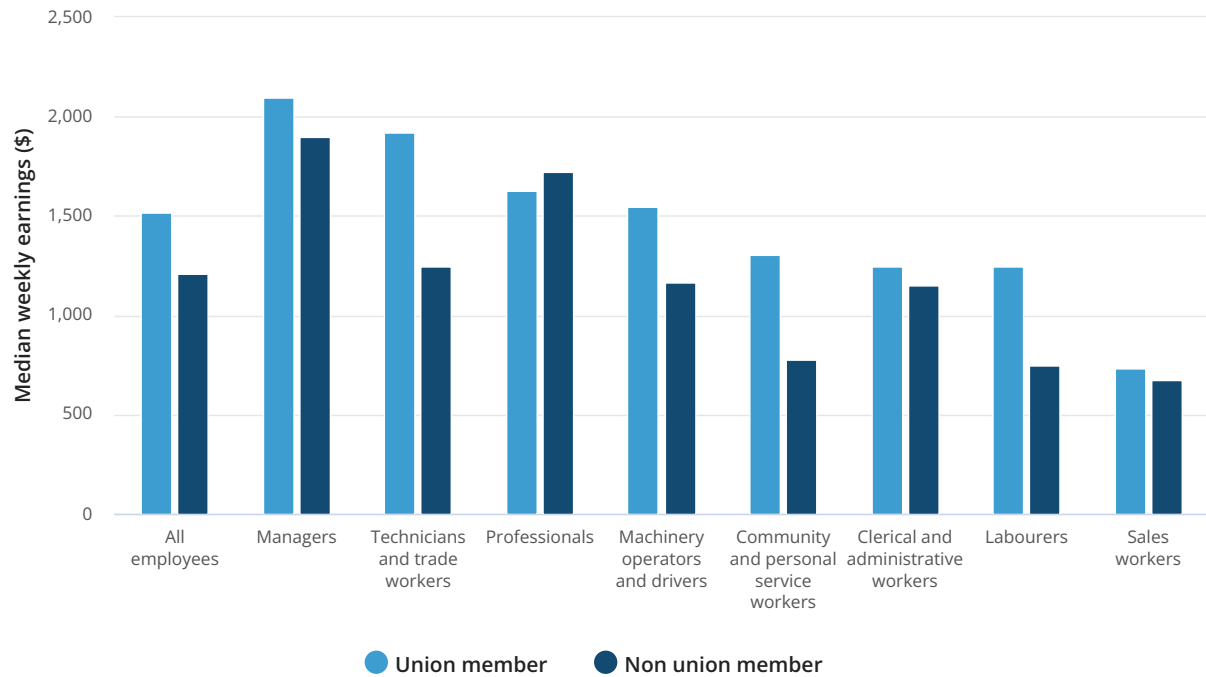
Trade union membership, by state and territory



Earnings

The median weekly earnings for employees who were trade union members in their main job were \$1,520 per week, compared with \$1,208 for employees who were not a trade union member.

Median weekly earnings, by union membership in main job



Job characteristics

Of the employees who were trade union members only 7% were casual employees (employees without paid leave entitlements).

Table title

	Trade union member in main job		Not a trade union member in main job		Total employees	
	'000	%	'000	%	'000	%
Without paid leave entitlements	99.1	7%	2,559.6	26%	2,658.7	23%
Less than 12 months in main job	151.3	11%	2,806.5	28%	2,957.8	26%
Does not expect to remain in main job for next 12 months	116.5	8%	1,114.2	11%	1,230.7	11%
Not guaranteed a minimum number of weekly hours	151.4	11%	2,194.6	22%	2,346.0	21%

Data downloads

Trade union membership

⬇ Download all (3.27 MB)

Table 1 - Median Earnings by full-time or part-time, state and trade union members in main job, 2004-2022

⬇ [Download XLSX](#)
[157.2 KB]

Table 2 - Median earnings for employees by trade union membership, 2014-2022

⬇ [Download XLSX](#)
[3.09 MB]

Table 3 - Median Earning for employees by duration (length) of current trade union membership, 2022

⬇ [Download XLSX](#)
[88.53 KB]

Historical downloads

Table 3 - Median Earning for employees by duration (length) of current trade union membership, 2014-2021

Previous catalogue number

This release uses ABS catalogue number 6335.0*.

Prior to 2020, statistics were published in:

- [Characteristics of Employment \(/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/characteristics-employment-australia\)](#) (6333.0**), 2014-2019.
- [Employee Earnings, Benefits and Trade Union Membership \(https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/second+level+view?ReadForm&prodno=6310.0&viewtitle=Weekly%20Earnings%20of%20Employees%20\(Distribution\),%20Australia~Aug%201998~Previous~11/12/1998&&tabname=Past%20Future%20Issues&prodno=6310.0&issue=Aug%201998&num=&view=&\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/second+level+view?ReadForm&prodno=6310.0&viewtitle=Weekly%20Earnings%20of%20Employees%20(Distribution),%20Australia~Aug%201998~Previous~11/12/1998&&tabname=Past%20Future%20Issues&prodno=6310.0&issue=Aug%201998&num=&view=&) (6310.0), 1998-2013.
- [Trade Union Members \(https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/second+level+view?ReadForm&prodno=6325.0&viewtitle=Trade%20Union%20Members,%20Australia~August%201996~Latest~09/02/1997&&tabname=Past%20Future%20Issues&prodno=6325.0&issue=August%201996&num=&view=&\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/second+level+view?ReadForm&prodno=6325.0&viewtitle=Trade%20Union%20Members,%20Australia~August%201996~Latest~09/02/1997&&tabname=Past%20Future%20Issues&prodno=6325.0&issue=August%201996&num=&view=&) (6325.0), 1976-1996.
- [Trade Union Statistics \(https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/second+level+view?ReadForm&prodno=6323.0&viewtitle=Trade%20Union%20Statistics,%20Australia~June%201996~Latest~03/01/1997&&tabname=Past%20Future%20Issues&prodno=6323.0&issue=June%201996&num=&view=&\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/second+level+view?ReadForm&prodno=6323.0&viewtitle=Trade%20Union%20Statistics,%20Australia~June%201996~Latest~03/01/1997&&tabname=Past%20Future%20Issues&prodno=6323.0&issue=June%201996&num=&view=&) (6323.0), 1969-1996
- [Labour Report \(https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/second+level+view?ReadForm&prodno=6101.0&viewtitle=Labour%20Statistics,%20Australia~1997~Latest~23/12/1997&&tabname=Past%20Future%20Issues&prodno=6101.0&issue=1997&num=&view=&\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/second+level+view?ReadForm&prodno=6101.0&viewtitle=Labour%20Statistics,%20Australia~1997~Latest~23/12/1997&&tabname=Past%20Future%20Issues&prodno=6101.0&issue=1997&num=&view=&) (6101.0), 1891-1973

*Note: Catalogue number 6336.0 was previously used [Working Conditions, Australia \(https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6335.0\)](#), Feb to May 1979.

**Note: Catalogue number 6333.0 was previously used for [Working Conditions, Australia \(Preliminary\) \(https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/6335.0Feb-May%201979?OpenDocument\)](#), Feb to May 1979.

Methodology

[Characteristics of Employment, Australia methodology, August 2022](#)